



I thought the following might have more of a personal interest than the community ~~involvement~~ involvement of our family. This early photo was returned to us by a cousin visiting from Edinburgh a few years ago. It was, no doubt, sent to relatives overseas by my Mother-- we guess the date to be 1900.

As closely as we can estimate the house would be built between 1892 and '97. The small wing to the right (now removed) was my Father's homestead dwelling -he filed on the land in 1888-and served as our family's kitchen for over 50 years. The lumber for the main structure was shipped from B.C.-local supplies being of poor quality. The window and door frames were cut and assembled while building went on, and you may have noticed that they are very different from the "ready-cuts" used in houses today.

Shrubbery was planted in later years, all of it coming from Patmore Bros. pioneer nurserymen in Brandon. There was once a lawn in front with two tennis courts !

The spruce trees to the west and south of the house were very small when planted--as I recall in the late 1920's before the dry years. They seemed to stand still for ages ! We never watered anything in those days. I believe we put a Lilac between each Spruce and often wondered if they survived.

It is difficult to see in this print, but there is actually a small group of people (and two dogs) in the extreme lower left hand corner --Father and Mother with oldest son, Robert, and that is how we guessed at the date. Robert would be about 2 years old in this snap ,which would make it 1900.

Incidentally, all four of us were actually born in the bed-room upstairs (double windows facing south).

W.S.S.

Feb. 1981.

#203-520 Rithet St.
VICTORIA, B.C.
V8V 1E2

February 1st, 1983

Mrs. Betty Bauer,
Binscarth, Manitoba. ROJ OGO

Dear Mrs. Bauer-

In response to the recent letter in the "Western Producer" advising of plans now underway to publish a History of the Binscarth Community, I am enclosing a copy of some material about my Father's years there.

I fully realize that there is far more detail here than can be used, as it was originally drafted for a ~~short~~ family history that we undertook to prepare a few years ago. However, feel free to make whatever revisions and deletions that appear necessary and advisable.

Enclosed find some other material which may be of interest and useful in adding to records and information.

Please extend my personal good wishes to the Committee and my hope that success rewards this very worth-while undertaking. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely



Wm. S. Scarth

Matthew Stevenson Scarth-1865-1958

Born at "inscarth House", near Finstown, Orkney. His junior schooling was in Finstown and in his early teens he attended the Old High School in Edinburgh.

He sailed for Canada from Greenoch (Clyde) -July 2, 1884 on the S.S. "~~Waldensian~~ Waldensian". They reached Quebec on July 11th. His Diary of the trip recounts the very careful navigation necessary through the Strait of Belle Isle to miss the fields of ice and numerous large bergs. He was met by his Uncle, James Stevenson, at Quebec and after a few days visit proceeded to Ottawa and "Langside", a farm and large market garden on the outskirts of the city. This would be his home for two years.

¹ Unfortunately, he was likely too busy with all the new Canadian experiences to record events after 1886, so any accounts of his activities are based on his own recollection of them as related to family members from time to time.

Matthew came west by C.P.R. in 1886 and his Winnipeg stay was of short duration. Teams and wagons were getting stuck in the notorious Red River mud on Main Street, and the buildings appeared to be of flimsy construction. The general atmosphere of the town seemed to indicate that it was either just recovering from a ^{collapsed} land boom or going into another one. He eventually arrived at Birtle by rail which was as far as the Manitoba & North Western R.R. had reached before it went bankrupt. The C.P.R. took over and steel was laid to the town site of Binscarth in the autumn of 1886.

For a few months Matthew's headquarters would be the Binscarth Colony Farm, located in what is generally the "Woodstock" district in later years. It was a project undertaken by the Scottish, Ontario & Manitoba Land Company with the object of encouraging new settlers to locate in the area and to give them some practical experience and

advice as they faced this new world of north-western Manitoba.

It is not possible now to do more than speculate ^{why} ~~that~~ the name "Binscarth" was given to the Colony Farm venture because there appears to be sound indications that Matthew's father, Robert, who established the Orkney "Binscarth" had made some financial investment in the Land Company. By this time the Colony Farm had brought in some very good livestock, cattle in particular, from Ontario. During his second summer there Matthew had an opportunity to go along as a helper with some selected show animals to the Winnipeg Exhibition. I believe he had Farm Foreman Jack Anderson and Tom Almack with him on the trip.

Part of one summer provided new and interesting experiences when he was a member of a "location" party under the direction of S.A. Bedford (later Dr. Bedford) Director of the Brandon Experimental Farm). The project's main effort was to establish immigrant Hungarian settlers on their new colony at Esterhazy. The "locators" preferred their tent to the risk ~~of~~ and discomfort of the insect-infested accomodation of "The Ritz" at Whitewood. It was necessary to keep a sharp eye on the lumber being stock-piled by the C.P.R. for the settlers' homes.

Matthew supplemented his experience at the Colony Farm by seasonal work with two local farmers--W.P. Storey in the Millwood area and Tom Fraser near Woodstock. It was during his stay at Frasers that he was able to observe at first hand one of the community's early developments. Major C.A. Boulton had worked very assiduously to get the main C.P.R. route directed through what was then known as the "Shell River Country" north-west of what later became Russell, but the powers of the day had kept south, crossing the Assiniboine at Millwood. An opportunity arose with the arrival of a Provincial Election, and the Major, never one to pass up a good political move,

entered the fray as a candidate. A rail connection was promised to the now growing village of Russell by extending a branch from Binscarth. In an era of ~~rather~~ deliberate and measured political strategy ~~moves~~, a rather precipitate date had been set by the Boulton forces for the completion of this project, and a reasonable supply of materials had been secured to show that they meant business. The general route of the right-of-way ran through, or near, Tom Fraser's homestead and Matthew was to get a first-hand view as rails and ties were dumped helter-skelter by the harried teamsters before any grade was ~~surveyed~~ even surveyed. Those familiar with the area may be able to imagine this spectacle as it dodged around the sloughs and rough terrain existing at that time.

Homestead land was being taken up steadily and Matthew was aware that it would soon be a scarce item. He filed on the SW Quarter of Sect. 6-Twp. 19-Rge, 27-west of the 1st Mer. in April, 1888. The original Receipt for the Filing Fee of \$10.00 issued by the Sub-Land Office in Birtle is dated April 23~~rd~~, 1888. His closest neighbors would be ~~the~~ Oswald Inman and James Turnbull.

✓ By the 1890's Matthew, through purchase and pre-emption, acquired adjacent land to make up a section, and 640 acres must have seemed a very large area at that time. Some of it was open prairie, but, typical of the parkland zone, there was scattered willow brush and poplar bluffs. He inherited a love of trees from his parents and it was only many years later when more cultivated land became a vital necessity to meet rising costs that he made a reluctant decision to clear away the larger bluffs. A slow and back-breaking task-starting with oxen and later with horses for power. With the advent of the newer and more flexible gas tractors for farming, a Waterloo Boy was purchased in 1918 and the land-clearing process could be speeded up to some extent.

Nature has no way of knowing where farmers need trees, but the

experience of bitter winter winds must have fostered the idea of windbreak shelters for the farmstead. Matthew was among the earliest to take advantage of the splendid program initiated by the Dominion Forestry Farm at Indian Head, and all of our family would derive benefits from his foresight. All of the early plantings near our house originated from the pioneer Patmore Nurseries in Brandon. A goodly number of the trees and shrubbery survived long after he left active farming, monuments to his love for the natural gifts of the park country.

Always interested in cattle, Matthew was partial to the Shorthorn breed as they were more of the dual purpose type and fitted into the farm program. I can personally recall his one venture into Aberdeen-Angus, but no one should think that his decision not to change had anything to do with the breed itself. He had always recognized its good qualities. But in a moment of weakness he had placed a bid on a black cow (everything "black" was called Angus in those days) and there being no further bids he became its owner. It seemed somewhat restive but was duly placed in our pasture with the other cows. They had learned that a two-strand barbed wire fence was an adequate restraint from wandering. Not so the newcomer--whose name I cannot recall, which may be just as well. I know it came out of no recognized Herd Book. "Blackie" took one quick look around and headed for distant places at high speed, fence or no fence. This set a very bad example for our domesticated bovines and, as I recall, the dark lady became the guest of honor as a contribution to our local Beef Ring, that summer or the next.

There were considerable areas of trees and brush on the east half of the section and in between open spaces with good pasture, so that a system of fencing was eventually established that enabled the rotation of each field for pasture as its turn came for summerfallowing. This was a helpful factor in weed control as well.

Some of the family once attempted to estimate the mileage of fencing on our farm, but I regret not being able to recall the total. It was an amazing figure.

The standard farm papers of the earlier days in Manitoba were the "Nor West Farmer" and the "Family Herald and Weekly Star". and Matthew took an active interest in the development of the early farm organizations. The family has a clear recollection of his purchase of some of the first shares and ^{his active} promotion of the Grain Growers Grain Co. (later the U.G.G.). Our neighbor to the east - I.B. Griffiths - had settled there in the early years of the century and his interest in the political emergence of the agrarian movement was often the basis for lively and searching discussions.

Matthew was one of the Directors of the Binscarth Agricultural Society from its start before the First War until his retirement from active farming. He would share a record of service with James Fletcher, Louis Johnson, James Thompson of Woodstock, P.J. McIntosh, James Murray and Freeman Rice.

While Matthew enjoyed the western rural scenes he would not be classified as the "happy traveller" if he had to be alone. He liked to have company on a trip and feel unburdened by the responsibility of travel details and arrangements. By some lucky circumstances the family was able to satisfy two of his fondest ambitions--to see the Rockies and the Peace River Country. The summer of 1939 provided the opportunity and he ~~enjoyed~~ ^{enjoyed} in the lovely environment of the Banff National Park, and later three months in the Peace River area, touring over both the B.C. and Alberta sections. That experience would fulfil at least part of his dream to cross Canada from sea to sea.

By his son Wm. S. Scarth

✓ Perhaps after paragraph 2 on Page 3

Additional notes: Per H. L. L.

In 1891 my mother Cecilia Scarth came to Binscarth to keep house for her brothers, Mathew and William. The latter had left a seafaring life and had come from Orkney to his brother at Binscarth. Subsequently he homesteaded the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 6 Twp. 19 Rge 27 W. 1st Mer. The two brothers were batching together in Mathew's home. William's homestead was just a quarter of a mile north on the same section.

My Mother kept house for them for several years until Uncle Will married and moved to his own quarter. On my Mother's subsequent return from a trip back to Orkney she met Wilhelmina Stewart, daughter of Captain Stewart of the steamship the Empress of Britain, on which my Mother was returning to Canada. Miss Stewart was also coming to Canada to visit relatives in Montreal and Captain Stewart asked Mother if she would sort of keep his daughter under her wing. Mother and Miss Stewart became great friends and Mother invited her to come and visit her brother, Mathew and herself at Binscarth. Evidently Miss Stewart did and the visit ended in her becoming my Aunt Minnie. She and my Uncle Mathew were married July 31st 1897. Aunt Minnie predeceased my Uncle in 1925.

Norman Turnbull

SCARTH-MATTHEW - Born at "Binscath House", near Finstown, Orkney,
Scotland.
1868-1958.

His junior schooling was in Finstown and in his early years he attended the Old High School in Edinburgh.

1884
He sailed for Canada from Greenock (Clyde) on July 2, 1884 on the S.S. "Waldensian", reaching Quebec on July 11. There were still many icebergs in the Belle Isle Straits requiring very careful navigation. His Uncle, James Stevenson, met him at Quebec and after a few days visit Matthew proceeded to Ottawa and "Langside", a farm and large market garden on the outskirts of the city. This would be his home for two years.

1886
Matthew came west by C.P.R. in 1886 and had a short stay in Winnipeg. After the stone and brick of Scottish towns the Winnipeg buildings looked rather flimsy, and teams with loaded wagons were getting stuck in the notorious Red River mud of Main Street. The general atmosphere of the town gave the impression that it was either just recovering from a collapsed "boom" or going into another one. He eventually arrived at Binscath by rail. This was as far as the Manitoba & North Western Railway had reached before it went bankrupt. The C.P.R. took it over in 1886. Steel was laid to the townsite of Binscath in the autumn of 1886.

For a few months Matthew's headquarters would be the Binscath Colony Farm, located in what became the "Woodstock" district in later years. The Farm was a project undertaken by the Scottish, Ontario and Manitoba Land Company with the object of encouraging new settlers to locate in the area and give them some practical experience and advice as they faced this new world of North-Western Manitoba.

At this date it is not possible to go on and speculate why the name "Binscath" was given to the Colony Farm venture but there is no doubt that Matthew's father, Robert, who established the Orkney Binscath had some financial interest in the Land Company. When the railway came through in 1886, the townsite was named "Binscath".

Matthew had an opportunity to broaden his experience with Canadian livestock one summer when the Colony Farm sent some of their fine purebred cattle to the Winnipeg Exhibition. Farm Foreman Jack Anderson was in charge and Tom Almack assisted them. Another interesting interlude was with a "location party" under the direction of Mr. S.A. Bedford (later Director of the Brandon Experimental Farm). The main effort was to establish immigrant Hungarian settlers on their new colony at Esterhazy. The "locators" had their first experience with Bed-Bugs in a hostelry at Whitewood and promptly secured a tent for their own accommodation.

Whenever opportunity was available, Matthew supplemented his farm experience by seasonal work with local residents - ~~XXXXXX~~ W.P. Storey at Millwood and Tom Fraser near Woodstock. While at Frasers, he was able to observe at first hand some feverish activity which he referred to later as a mixture of "railroading and politicking". In the early 1880's Major C.A. Boulton and others had worked diligently to get the main C.P.R. route through what was then known as the "Shell River" country, north-west of what later became Russell. But the road had kept south, crossing the Assiniboine at Millwood. A timely Provincial election seemed the opportunity for action and a rail connection to the rapidly growing Russell community by a branch line from Binscath was a timely promise.

Tom Fraser's home must have been somewhere near the general route of the line, but no one seemed to know much about that. The harried teamsters had orders to haul all the ties and rails "north of Binscarth" and dump them off when they got stuck. Tom Fraser, of ancient Scottish lineage, had never been known to swear but this time lapsed into Gaelic to express his feelings.

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The first dwelling would be a small frame structure, which was later attached to the main house, which would be built between 1892 and 95. Minnie Stewart had come from her home in England as a governess for a family near Elkhorn, and she and Matthew were married in July, 1897. The family of four were all born on the farm.

ROBERT - 1898 ; WILLIAM - 1901 ; EWA - 1906 ; CECIL - 1907.

At this date the first three are now living in Victoria, B.C. and CECIL is living in The Dalles, Oregon.

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The standard farm papers of the earlier days in Manitoba were the "Norwest Farmer" and the "Family Herald and Weekly Star" and Matthew took an early and active interest in the pioneer work of the budding farm organizations. He was among the first in the district to promote and purchase shares in the young ~~Brandon~~ Grain Growers Grain Co. (later the U.G.G.) he was one of the Directors of the Binscarth Agricultural Society from its start before the First War until his retirement from active farming. He would share a record

JAMES THOMPSON of

of service with James Fletcher, Lewis Johnson, James Thompson of Woodstock, I.J. McIntosh, James Murray and Freeman Rice.

In common with many of the early Manitoba settlers Matthew had fostered an interest in the developing scene on new frontiers--the Peace River country in particular, and a view of the Canadian Rockies. By happy circumstance the family was able to satisfy at least part of his dream. The summer of 1939 provided the opportunity and he was able to enjoy a trip through the lovely environment of the Banff National Park, and later three months in the Peace River area, touring over both the B.C. and Alberta portions.

SCARTH - WILLIAM - an elder brother of Matthew's--located on the half-section immediately north; viz-N^o 6-19-27 in the 1890's, and built a home there. Early in the 1900's their family moved to Oregon. The farm was rented and occupied in turn by John Hastie, ~~Thos. Worth~~ and Chas. Fisher and purchased by Andrew Fraser in 1910. Worth

W.S.S. Feb. 1981.

[Faint handwritten notes and signatures at the bottom of the page, including "James Thompson" and "W.S.S."]